

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK
SUBJECT: TWO MORE BY-ELECTIONS ON THE HORIZON

REF: LONDON 7651

SUMMARY: THE RECENT DEMISE OF TWO LABOR MPS HAS
INCREASED LABOR'S OVERALL MINORITY IN COMMONS AND
REDUCED ITS WORKING MAJORITY. AS A RESULT, THE
GOVERNMENT FACES TWO MORE BY-ELECTIONS, THOUGH IT IS
DOUBTFUL THEY WILL BE SCHEDULED BEFORE THE FALL.
END SUMMARY.

1. TWO LABOR MPS HAVE DIED IN THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS,
VACATING SEATS IN MANCHESTER, MOSS SIDE AND PENISTONE,
AND INCREASING THE GOVERNMENT'S OVERALL DEFICIT IN
COMMONS TO 17. INCLUDING HAMILTON (REFTTEL), LABOR
NOW FACES THE BY-ELECTION DEFENSE OF THREE SEATS.
AT MOSS SIDE, REDISTRICTING IN 1974 CONVERTED A MARGINAL
CONSERVATIVE SEAT TO A MARGINAL LABOR SEAT. ALTHOUGH
THE LABOR VOTE HELD UP WELL IN MANCHESTER IN THE RECENT
LOCAL ELECTIONS, THE MOSS SIDE SEAT COULD BE VULNERABLE
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TO A SHARP DECLINE IN LIBERAL SUPPORT. THE GOVERNMENT,
ACCORDINGLY, HAS SOME CAUSE FOR CONCERN ABOUT THAT SEAT.
THE PENISTONE CONSTITUENCY, LOCATED IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE,
RETURNED THE FORMER MP WITH A 15,000 MAJORITY AND MUST
BE CONSIDERED A ROCK-RIBBED LABOR STRONGHOLD.

2. CANDIDATES HAVE YET TO BE SELECTED FOR THESE TWO

CONSTITUENCIES. THE ATTENDANT DELAYS MAKE IT UNLIKELY THAT BY-ELECTIONS CAN BE SCHEDULED BEFORE JULY, WHICH MEANS THAT THEY CANNOT BE HELD BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE SUMMER HOLIDAY SEASON. AS A RESULT, THE GOVERNMENT MAY DECIDE TO DELAY THE BY-ELECTIONS UNTIL THE FALL OR TO DISPENSE WITH THEM ALTOGETHER IF CALLAGHAN DECIDES ON A FALL GENERAL ELECTION. ALTHOUGH THESE VACANCIES DIMINISH THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFECTIVE WORKING MAJORITY IN COMMONS, IT STILL HAS A FAIRLY COMFORTABLE MARGIN OF 15 VOTES, INCLUDING THE LIBERALS.

STREATOR

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